

City Council
TESTIMONIES
7/14/2010

SHERMAN WONG

Good afternoon, Chairman Todd Apo and members of the City Council. I'm Sherman Wong. I'm representing the General Contractors Association. General Contractors Association is an organization comprised of over five hundred and seventy general contractors, subcontractors, and construction-related firms. The Honolulu Rail Transit Projects final Environmental Impact Statement points out the positive impacts rail will have on the local economy and the environment. We'd like to emphasize that rail is the biggest immediate job stimulus available in the State of Hawaii today. It will put thousands of our people back to work, and they will put this money back into our economy. We have never seen a recession of this magnitude, and its devastating effects on the industry and its workforce. We see firsthand how it hurts families, it hurts their dependents, and it places entire households in jeopardy. The Honolulu Rail Project offers the best solution with job creations of such a magnitude that it would put the greatest number of our people back to work in the shortest amount of time. In the long term, rail is an integral part of the permanent transportation solution to reduce the burden on our roadways. All of our members in the contracting industry ... rely heavily on uncongested roadways to effectively carry on with our daily business. By providing commuters with a convenient and reliable transportation alternative to the automobile, our commercial vehicles have less competition for space on those busy roadways. And the most important benefit of the rail project is its contribution towards improving the quality of life for our future generations and for a sustainable future of our environment. It can provide the greatest shift away from our overdependence on imported crude oil and emissions of millions of tons of greenhouse gases. The State has a strategic energy plan that will reduce our dependence on imported crude oil by 2020. The rail project will offer the quickest, easiest, and biggest transition of all our transportation systems towards the use of clean, renewable energy sources, whether it be from solar, wind, geothermal, ocean, biofuels, or any combination thereof that will produce clean electricity. So in summary, rail is not only a key component of transportation infrastructure necessary for our island's quality, growth, and prosperity; it will provide us an immediate opportunity to stimulate our state's economy and jumpstart our state's efforts towards a clean energy future. I'd like to thank you all for the opportunity provide our views on this issue.

CHOON JAMES

The City Corporation is ceasing our family's entire commercial lot in Hauula right now to relocate a \$13 million Hauula fire station. We've been forced to spend much time and money to seek justice for our families and affected neighborhood. [INDISTINCT] Miyata refused to explore other alternate sites. It was his way, or the highway, and he has provided faulty and incomplete information on which some of you voted to approve the Resolution 10003. Standing up against a big bully like City Hall is very intimidating. As a eminent domain victim, I have

witnessed corruption, threats, intimidations, and arrogance from this administration. They shut you out, they ignore you, and they can do more if they wanted to. My own City Councilmember, Donovan Dela Cruz, ignore and stonewall affected residents. He ignore emails, phone calls, and registered mail. Donovan Dela Cruz, our district representative, [INDISTINCT] a false sense of community support from other people who are not service. Now, having—and there are petitions, and now people are saying that the petition that they signed was to condemn land. And just with this, you folks are going to develop [INDISTINCT] which is a transit oriented development around each rail. And we have been told that there will be apartments, condos, retail shops, offices, and restaurant. It sounds like a new subdivision at every stop. We are talking then logically about condemning numerous private properties to make way for private developers. Please remember the fiasco condemnation in Kelo v. City of New London in Connecticut. Homes and properties were razed to make way to revitalize the area, and now, five years later, there's no money to do the revitalization between that were [INDISTINCT] by legislators, politicians, private developers, and bureaucrats all gang up together. The victims ... okay; thank you very much. So, please, how can we assure that private property rights are going to be protected, and that the small people are not going to be bulldozed by the City Hall. Thank you very much.

RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM DELA CRUZ:

Yes, but Mr. Marvin [INDISTINCT] has emailed you, he called you, and there was absolutely no response. And I also emailed you later on, many times, even with a statement saying a response is requested, and I never heard back from you. And you also orchestrated Laie Community Association to go against us, when the service, the Hauula service station does not service Laie. Kahuku Fire Station service Laie. There's a lot of nefarious—you know, this is election time, I know you might be looking for votes from the firemen, but private property wise— Well, you did not respond to us many times. You can manipulate anything you want. You know it, and I know it, and God knows it.

KATHRYN KUPUKAA

Good afternoon, Chair Apo and members of the City Council. My name is Kathryn Kupukaa. I received a response on the EIS from Wayne Yoshioka, and I was ... quite taken aback by the response. Although I'm not an engineer, part of the response was that I had issue with the traffic and the lanes on Kamehameha Highway around the Pearlridge area, and ... Dillingham Boulevard. And they stated that no lanes were going to be removed. And I can hardly believe that. For instance, just last week, they were ... repairing or doing some work at a bus pad right in front of Pearlridge. They took up two lanes of Kamehameha Highway, so traffic was impacted. So how can they say that when they're gonna construct the rail and the ... what do

you call, the ... the station, right, it's gonna be a hundred yards long. And I can't see that they don't have enough land to ... you know, construct that station without taking away ... land from the ... taking away traffic lanes. And I don't know. How am I supposed to believe that ... I find the response very unsatisfactory. And ... I was wondering ... I continue to see ... in letters to the editor about the rail will ... reduce traffic congestion. As John McKenna, president of WOEDA, just this week said that, we strongly support City's elevated rail plan because it will reduce traffic congestion. Is it ... you that's supposed to—are obligated to ... make a public statement that rail will not reduce traffic congestion, so these people won't be in the dark? And I'm sure they're educated, intellectual people that ... I don't know. They're still in the dark. Thank you.

BOB LOY

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the council. Bob Loy testifying on behalf of the Outdoor Circle. The Outdoor Circle is concerned about the lack of substantive responses and concrete solutions to problems that were raised in comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. FEIS acknowledges the project will change the character of rural and heavily urbanized areas through which it will be built. The project will block protected mauka and makai views, resulting in substantial visual effects. View obstructions and changes to views of prominent landmarks will be unavoidable, and substantial. So that's a lot of concrete with the project, but there's no concrete solutions and resolutions to how the City is going to compensate for the loss of these things in our County. Same thing with street trees. They have a plan to pull street trees out, and to replace them and replant them, but there's no specifics as to where, exactly how many. There appears to be a deficit of some three hundred trees in the plan. Same for landscaping plans. All of the visual intrusions that are going to be created by the guideway, the train, and stations are going to be fixed through a variety of things that are supposed to happen in the future, as opposed to things that have already been laid out and are concrete. By now, it should be clear to most everyone that this will be a permanent and physical barrier within our community. The Honolulu Transit Project, we still believe, is destined to become the most visually dominant and intrusive construction project in the history of Hawaii. While its ability to ease traffic problems on Oahu has been the subject of some debate, its negative impact on the visual environment of this island cannot be denied, and is still somehow virtually immeasurable. Whatever good it might bring will be at the expense of the beauty of our islands, and the degradation of the communities through which it travels. Thank you very much.

FRANK GENADIO

Mr. Chair, members. The transit EIS is based on false premises and an incomplete analysis. It should be rejected by both the FTA and the Governor. A notice of intent on the project in the federal register in 2007 states that the draft EIS would consider five distinct transit technologies. Neither the draft, nor final EIS comes close to considering anything other than steel wheels on steel rails. The City justifies everything with its so-called expert panel and voter ratification of steel wheels. Everyone knows the panel was a setup, but the Council allowed the City to take over responsibility for technology selection, and then gave voters the wrong question on the 2008 ballot. The Mayor could not have planned it better. Approval of this EIS will leave three steel wheels competitors, rather than an open competition among multiple system suppliers. Is the project about campaign and development dollars, jobs, and votes, or about what would be the best system for Oahu taxpayers and commuters? The final EIS must be rejected because of failure to meet the record of intent. A delay could help the rail project. I request this Council support the need for a supplemental EIS. Mahalo.

HANNAH MIYAMOTO

Councilmembers, I am speaking on behalf of Sierra Club Oahu Group. I'm transportation energy chair. I want to bring some of the facts that—to the final EIS which make us particularly supportive of it. I can't present the official position at this time, we're considering it right now. There's a reduction in islandwide traffic by 3.7 percent if you don't build the rail system. It's also going to reduce traffic delay to 18 percent, and all that has an overall reduction, air pollution, 3.9 to 4.6 percent, also reducing carbon dioxide emissions by a 171 metric tons a day. Also, but more importantly, I think, is the impact of what it's going to do for shifting people from cars to transit. Currently, bus transit does not attract more than 21 percent of all peak hour morning trips in the Kapolei-Waikiki corridor, except for the 36 percent that now travel between downtown and Ala Moana by bus. Between Waipahu and Waikiki, there's only 5 percent use transit now. However, with the rail system that's been planned, transit will attract about 35 to 62 percent of all travel in the Kapolei-Waikiki corridor. For example, 60 percent of travelers between Kapolei and downtown which use transit, almost triple the current level, and between Waipahu and Waikiki, there'll be seven times more transit riders. Also, I want to emphasize that an at grade rail system will provide few additional riders, because it will provide no significant improvement over the existing bus service. Which means it will very unlikely to receive any federal funds anyways. It would damage much more iwi and prehistoric artifacts than the elevated plan. It would create a virtual barrier in the communities that it passes, particularly Chinatown. And that is really important for our policies regarding strengthening local communities, because the at grade system would weaken the local community. And that's why we conclude that the visual im—I would conclude, at least, that the visual impact from the

proposed elevated rail lane is outweighed by the many comparative advantages of choosing an elevated rail line over doing nothing, or stopping the planning process, and designing an at grade rail level. Thank you. I'll take any questions.

SPENCER LEINEWEBER

Aloha, Councilmembers. I'm Spencer Leineweber. I'm president elect of AIA Honolulu. And the AIA Honolulu has supported light rail transit for the last five years in our discussions with the City. And we feel that the main thing that is missing right now is flexibility in the transit. We have provided testimony, and if you go to our webpage, we have done a number of simulations of what we think the rail will look like in our community in its elevated state. And we feel that the rail must be flexible, so that as it gets built, it could possibly come down to grade, and not block the mauka to makai views that will currently be blocked by the elevated rail. We feel it's very important that this flexibility be incorporated into the rail transit system right now, and if the current plan proceeds with heavy rail, we are locked in to an elevated system forever. And that decision should not be made. We feel a light rail system that can go elevated where it needs to go elevated, and at grade where it needs go at grade is the best system for our community.

ARVID YOUNGQUIST

Chair Apo, members of the Honolulu City Council; my name is Arvid Youngquist. I'd like to touch upon a few things. First of all, we're talking about a final Environmental Impact Statement, not a draft. It's true, the Governor takes her own sweet time to veto twenty-nine bills, so she can take until December 6th, if so she pleases. But I believe, as my button says, eventually, we'll have the fixed rail. I believe, actually, contrary to some of you, on a steel on steel, I've supported it for the last sixty-two years of my life. [INDISTINCT] Some of you actually have a train line that runs from downtown to uptown, which I keep reminding the Councilmember from Pearl City. I hope you had a chance to ride on it when you go to Pearlridge Shopping Center. Condemnation will require, if you want to do it in a humane and fair way, to have a route zig-zag, zig-zag. You'll take a long, long time and very costly. In terms of people in outs, resenting the way they are treated, I'm hoping when they get in, they don't just turn the table around and just be worse. And I think I've already covered the other three items that I mentioned. I think I jumped the gun on the other three. So ... it's not so much whether or not I support fixed rail. It's a good thing that you discuss this final EIS, but you just may have to sit on your hands until December 7th, and when you definitely have a new Mayor or

not ... and definitely a new Governor. But you just have to muster the political will. If you feel that this is the right thing, and people voted correctly in November of 2008. I don't care how you voted, but the people spoke. Thank you.

KEVIN KILLEEN

Aloha, Chair, members of the Council. I feel that the public has been bullied by the consultants, the special interests and the politicians on this issue. I think this is a poor example. Hawaii has the—double the national average of students who are afraid to go to school because of bullying. It's number one and that number one in a lot of other things, like [INDISTINCT] suicide attempts. This bullying is a bad thing. I think you should have a vote on whether it should be elevated or not. The EIS doesn't take into account stuff like climate change. Councilman Okino said there is no such thing as climate change at [INDISTINCT] meeting when he was told that there was three hundred thousand dollars available to study the effects of climate change on transportation. And there's been comments made about the general excise tax [INDISTINCT] being a technicality. I don't think it's a technicality, I think there are budget limits. The ... possibility of using alternative energy is limited because of HECO's monopoly, and they have testified at the Public Utilities Commission that there's a five percent limit on the amount of intermittent alternative energy that can be put on the grid on Oahu. So you're talking about up to five percent renewable energy that could be used, so this is not—not sure what they're saying about renewable energy can be used, at least not according to HECO. Thank you.

CLIFF SLATER

Chairman Apo, members of the Council, thank you for giving me this moment to testify on the 11,000 pages of the FEIS, including its appendices and eighteen technical reports. I would like to draw your attention to—on page 24 of the City's letter to me and the ... and the comments on the DEIS comments. Mr. Yoshioka say, You are correct in pointing out that traffic congestion will be worse in the future with rail than it is today without rail. And the rumors that Mr. Yoshioka was waterboarded to get that out of him would not be true, but nevertheless, it's a fact that most people in the Ewa plain do not understand that traffic congestion with rail will be worse than it is today. As far as the FEIS being ready to be out as a final EIS, the EPA last February told the City that they had to have the Section 106 consultation, which concerns the historic and archaeological resources, but that has to be completed prior to publication of the final Environmental Impact Statement. And I think as most of you know, that has not been done yet. Thank you.

RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM KOBAYASHI:

Yes; the burial sites are supposed to be surveyed before the route is chosen, is one of the issues that should have been take care of in 2006. It wasn't take care of, and the Oahu Island Burial Council has requested of the State that that be done, that they have a full archaeological survey. That's one item. As far as the other historic properties, the idea that we can run this along the waterfront, with trains every minute and a half in the rush hour ... thirty-five feet high from the underside of it, and thirty feet wide, and then find that that is the environmentally preferable alternative is a real stretch.

CHRIS BALLESTEROS

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, Councilmembers. My name is Chris Ballesteros, and I'm here as a representative of an organization called We Will Ride. We represent over four hundred young people, mostly high school and college aged students, that are dedicated to the promise that rail transit has for the future of Honolulu. Now, there are a number of reasons why we support rail transit. Obviously, because it's environmentally responsible, that it moves towards sustainability, and it promotes economic growth. But more specifically to our generation, we believe that moving rail transit forward is critical, because it'll provide the jobs and the constru—the construction jobs, technology jobs, architecture, all sorts of high tech employment for our generation. It provides an incentive for young people, who have perhaps gone to the mainland for college to come back to the islands later on. So essentially, I'm here, and we're here to tell you all, to tell the people and the Council, that if you build a rail system, we will ride it. Thank you.

SEANNA PIEPER-JORDAN

Good afternoon. My name is Seanna Pieper-Jordan. I'm a graduate of Kamehameha Schools, and a current student at Yale University. I support rail development in Hawaii, because I want to return home, I want to have a reason to be back here, without innovation, without a look to the future. Without developments that can make us a competitive force in the Pacific region and the United States, there's no reason for students to want to come back from the mainland. A major opposition to my reasons to want to have rail development is my grandfather. He says, Why should I pay out of my retirement money to income tax? Why should I pay for something I might not be able to benefit from? And my answer to him, and to others in Hawaii who are opposed to this for the same reasons, are that you need to look to your children. Once they are

able to have developments in Honolulu, they put money into the State, and this money in the State will help to support our aging population. So support us now in this development, and we'll support you later. Thank you.

JON McKENNA

Good afternoon, Chair Apo, Councilmembers. My name is Jon McKenna. I represent the West Oahu Economic Development Association. Our association is made up of nearly one hundred businesses, community, and government leaders dedicated to supporting and advocating for the economic growth of West Oahu. Our area, as you know, is the fastest growing population of business based in the State, with the number of businesses here doubling in the past ten years, and more to come as Kapolei builds out. For businesses, time is money, and traffic congestion adds unnecessarily to the cost of doing business. Many of us, our employees, our customers, have to travel regularly between downtown Honolulu and Kapolei. Delays due to traffic are more often the norm, rather than the exception. The FEIS states that it will take thirty-eight minutes to travel from east Kapolei station to downtown. This travel reliability and consistency will benefit our area businesses and our residents. We strongly support the City's elevated rail plan, because it will reduce traffic congestion in the future, make it easier to travel between town and West Oahu, and improve the business climate of our island. Thank you.

CHARLES H. CAROLE

My name is Charles H. Carole. I'm the vice president of the Honolulu League of Women Voters. And ... [INDISTINCT] slightly disturbed about the final EIS. It seems that they used the population projections that was appeared in the State data book in 2006. However, there's been three cha—two other changes. In 2007, it reduced the number of people in 2030. In 2008, it also reduced—continued the reduction. So that ... the difference between the figure they used for 2030 and ... using the new projections that DBED has put out, was about a hundred thousand people. Okay. If ... the—also in the 2008 data book, they mentioned that the average increase per year was .3 percent between 2005 and 2010. If you continue this, you'll find out you're about a hundred and fifty thousand people in 2030. So that the lower population figures might affect the ridership, the revenue, and even the travel volume of the cars. I wish at some point that the ... EIS shows the correct population projections of DBED. Also, they should take a look at the .3 percent annual increase, so that the population would be like a hundred and fifty thousand less. It seems surprising that the 2008 annual report on the status of land use on Oahu, which is put out by the Department of Planning and Permitting, includes the correct population

projections. Now, the reason why the DBED has lowered their population projections each time is because of the US Department—Bureau of Census. And they do an annual estimate of population of Oahu each year. And presently, the population of Oahu for 2009, July 1st, is ... nine hundred and seven thousand people. You've got a long way to go. And I wish, as I said, I wish that they would show the correct figures and also relate it to revenue and also to the ... ridership. What I fear mostly, that if the federal government gives the \$1.55 billion, we are frozen into this program. Because if we stop the program partly through, we will find that we will have to repay the federal government the \$1.55 billion. And with all the other things there are facing the City, sewage for example, \$1.2 billion ... we people, we just don't have that much money in our pockets. Thank you.

RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM CACHOLA:

Definitely. I'm afraid so, yes. Definitely, I will. I agree. And if a contract is signed for construction in November of last year, and they don't start the construction, say, by the end of this year, isn't there an increase in cost? I would imagine so.